



The Influence of Leadership Style on Employee Performance in Government Institutions

Stephanus Aditya Purnama^{1*}, Naning Margasari²

Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta

Corresponding Author: Stephanus Aditya: stephanusadhytia.2025@student.uny.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

Employee performance in government institutions is regarded as a critical indicator of bureaucratic reform, public service quality, and organizational accountability. However, empirical evidence concerning the influence of leadership style on government employee performance still shows varied patterns, particularly because leadership effects are often mediated by motivation, culture, digital readiness, and organizational behavior. This study aims to synthesize the influence of various leadership styles on employee performance in government institutions and to identify the mechanisms explaining this relationship. A systematic literature review was conducted using the PRISMA guidelines. The search was performed in the Scopus database using the keywords leadership, performance, civil servant, public, Indonesia, and government. From 907 initial articles, screening was conducted based on publication year 2021–2026, journal article type, English language, open access, abstract relevance, DOI availability, and the use of primary data, resulting in 13 included articles. The review findings indicate that transformational, authentic, ethical, servant, transactional, crisis, and digital leadership contribute to government employee performance, although their influence is more frequently indirect. Employee performance is more strongly explained through public service motivation, organizational citizenship behavior, supportive organizational culture, work culture, authentic followership, organizational learning, dynamic capability, and managerial digital readiness.

INTRODUCTION

Employee performance in government institutions has increasingly been positioned as a key indicator of bureaucratic reform, public service quality, and institutional accountability. In contemporary public administration literature, leadership is no longer understood merely as a directive function, but as a mechanism for shaping motivation, service values, and work behavior among public officials. A systematic review of leadership and public service motivation indicates that leaders may influence subordinates' service orientation through value modeling, goal communication, and the reinforcement of work meaning (Hameduddin & Engbers, 2022). A recent meta-analysis also shows that leadership style is correlated with public service motivation, although the strength of this relationship varies across leadership types and cultural contexts (Ding & Wang, 2024). The relationship between public service motivation and individual performance has also been reinforced through cross-cultural evidence (Fan et al., 2022; Tang et al., 2024). Therefore, the study of leadership style and government employee performance is important because it connects organizational behavior, public values, and the effectiveness of state services.

The research landscape over the last five years shows that the relationship between leadership and government employee performance has been more frequently explained through mediating pathways than through a single direct effect. Among Vietnamese public officials, public service motivation was found to be related to performance through job satisfaction and person–organization fit (Thuy & Phinaitrup, 2023). In the Indonesian context, public leadership and new public management were found to be associated with civil servant performance through perceptions of good governance (Istianto & Wahyurudhanto, 2023). A study in the Nigerian public sector showed that ethical leadership improved performance through employee motivation and satisfaction (Oladimeji & Abdulkareem, 2023). Meanwhile, ethical leadership in the German public sector showed a relationship that depended on followers' need for autonomy, particularly in relation to job satisfaction (Aunin et al., 2024). This evidence confirms that public employee performance should be interpreted as an organizational outcome influenced by leadership, motivation, culture, and working conditions.

Although research on public sector leadership continues to develop, a knowledge gap remains in the inconsistency of findings regarding the leadership styles most relevant to government employee performance. Servant leadership, for example, was found to influence public sector employee performance in Ethiopia through public service motivation as a full mediator (Mishra & Hassen, 2023). In another study, servant leadership was also associated with organizational citizenship behavior through public service motivation and the length of time spent with the leader (Gnankob et al., 2022). A similar relationship was demonstrated among public employees, where public service motivation and job satisfaction mediated the effect of servant leadership on performance (Liu & Zhao, 2022). However, variations in national context, organizational type, performance measurement, and analytical design indicate that the available evidence has not yet been fully consolidated.

This gap demonstrates the need for a focused synthesis with strict article selection so that the pattern of leadership influence on government employee performance can be explained more systematically.

Changes in the bureaucratic environment caused by digitalization have also expanded the need to revisit the relationship between leadership style and government employee performance. A scoping review shows that digital leadership in the public sector has been mapped through competencies, capabilities, success factors, and its role in organizational digital transformation (Adie et al., 2024). In public sector organizations, digital leadership and digital transformation were found to have positive effects on organizational performance (Yusuf et al., 2023). A study on public services during the pandemic also confirmed that digital leadership was used to maintain service performance when face-to-face interaction was restricted (Susilawati et al., 2021). On the other hand, transformational leadership has generally been linked to affective commitment and performance through employee engagement (Jiatong et al., 2022). This study aims to answer how leadership styles influence employee performance in government institutions, through what mechanisms such influence operates, and what contribution can be made to SLR research mapping.

METHOD

This study used a systematic literature review design with a selection process based on PRISMA. Initial identification was conducted in the Scopus database using the keywords leadership AND performance AND civil AND servant AND public AND Indonesia AND government. The initial search produced 907 documents. The first screening was applied using the publication year limit of 2021–2026, leaving 599 documents. The second screening was conducted based on journal article document type, leaving 343 articles. The third screening was conducted based on English language, leaving 341 articles. The fourth screening was applied using the All Open Access criterion, resulting in 235 articles for eligibility assessment based on title, abstract, DOI, research design, subject, and relevance to the theme of leadership and employee performance in government institutions.

The inclusion criteria consisted of English-language articles published between 2021 and 2026, available in open access, having a DOI, using primary data, examining public sector employees, civil servants, or government employees, and discussing the direct or indirect influence of leadership style on employee performance, task performance, or public sector performance. The exclusion criteria consisted of articles that did not focus on leadership and performance, were not situated in government institutions or the public sector, were conceptual or review articles without primary data, lacked adequate abstract information, focused purely on the private sector, or were irrelevant to the research theme. No duplicated DOI articles or retracted articles were found during the screening process.

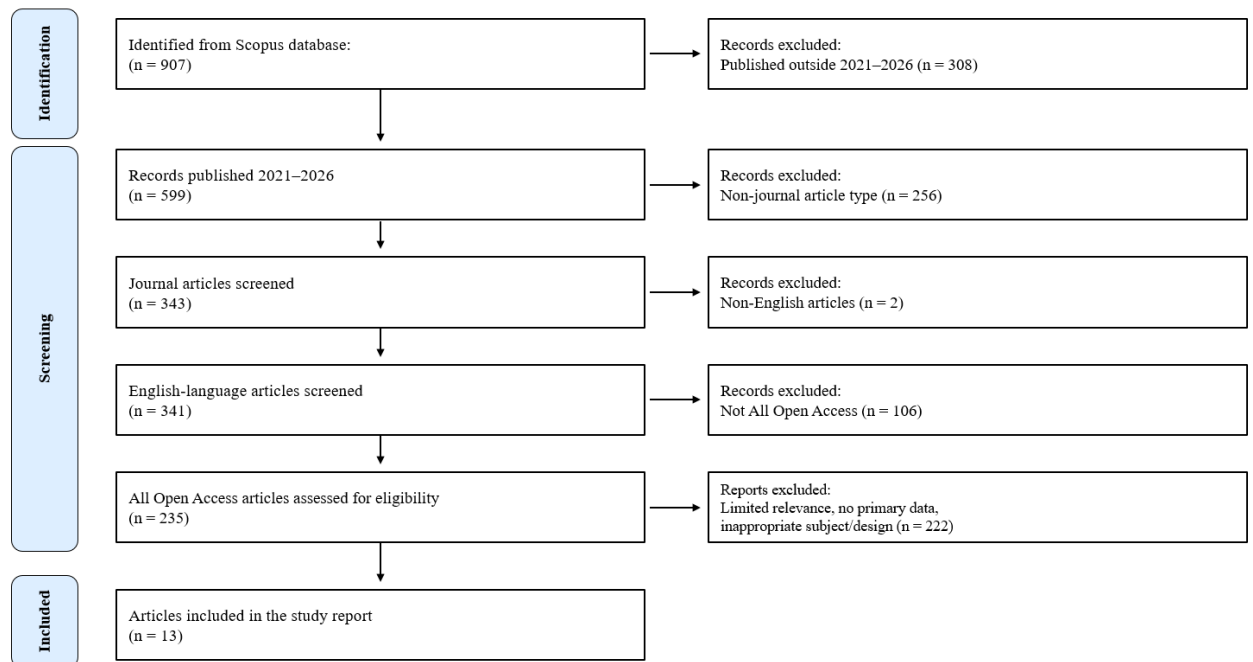
A total of 907 articles were identified through Scopus. At the screening stage, the articles were limited to publications from 2021 to 2026, leaving 599 articles. After the journal article type criterion was applied, the number of articles decreased to 343.

Screening based on English language resulted in 341 articles, while the restriction to All Open Access articles resulted in 235 articles. At the eligibility stage, 235 abstracts were assessed based on topic relevance, empirical design, government-related subjects, and the linkage between leadership and performance. A total of 222 articles were excluded at the eligibility stage because they did not meet the criteria of substance, design, subject, or relevance. In the final stage, 13 articles were retained as the main sources for synthesis.

PRISMA Flowchart

The following section presents the article selection flow based on the PRISMA guidelines, from the identification stage in the Scopus database to the final inclusion of articles that met the eligibility criteria for further analysis in this study. This flow outlines the number of records at each stage and the reasons for exclusion applied systematically, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. PRISMA Flowchart



RESULTS

A total of 13 articles were selected as the final synthesis sources. The included articles show the dominance of quantitative survey approaches using regression, SEM, PLS-SEM, AMOS, GSCA, or PROCESS Macro analysis techniques. The research subjects mostly consisted of civil servants, local government employees, ministry employees, public sector employees, metropolitan city employees, and employees of state institutions. No direct experimental intervention was found. The dominant findings were obtained from testing causal, mediating, or moderating relationships among leadership and performance variables.

Table 1. Article Review Results

No	Author	Conclusion/Findings
1	Saranani et al. (2026)	Social identification, personality traits, and transformational leadership had significant positive effects on public sector employee performance.
2	Wulandari et al. (2024)	Work autonomy had a significant effect on performance, whereas transformational leadership did not directly contribute to employee performance.
3	Muhazir et al. (2026)	Servant leadership and work culture had significant positive effects on civil servant performance in supporting agricultural extension services and agricultural development.
4	Mao et al. (2025)	Crisis leadership did not directly affect performance, but knowledge sharing and public service motivation served as positive mediators.
5	Utomo et al. (2025)	Authentic leadership improved authentic followership, which subsequently enhanced civil servant performance in local government organizations.
6	Radhi et al. (2025)	Leadership style, motivation, and remuneration had direct effects on employee performance and organizational performance in PTN-BH.
7	Aldhi et al. (2025)	Technological capability and digital skills improved public sector performance through managerial digital readiness strengthened by digital leadership.
8	Kusnadi et al. (2024)	Leadership mediated the effect of integrity on employee performance and became an important lever for public sector effectiveness.
9	AL Rawas & Jantan (2023)	Job description improved employee performance. Transactional leadership strengthened this relationship, whereas transformational leadership did not show positive moderation.
10	Astuti et al. (2023)	Ethical leadership influenced performance through public service motivation, whereas servant and transformational leadership had no direct effect.
11	Iswanti et al. (2023)	Ethical leadership affected OCB but did not directly affect performance. OCB mediated the influence of ethical leadership on performance.
12	Zam et al. (2025)	Digital leadership did not directly affect performance, but it had indirect effects through dynamic capability, organizational learning, and digital capability.
13	Ece & Erkmén (2026)	Authentic leadership did not directly affect task performance, but it operated through supportive organizational culture as a full mediator.

DISCUSSION

The synthesis of the articles shows that the influence of leadership style on government employee performance does not always occur linearly. In the context of the regional parliament secretariat, transformational leadership was found to play a positive role together with employees' social identification and personality traits (Saranani et al., 2026). However, different results were shown in the Sumenep Regency Government, where transformational leadership did not directly improve performance when work autonomy and work involvement had not functioned optimally (Wulandari et al., 2024). Among millennial civil servants in Semarang, ethical leadership was more relevant than servant leadership and transformational leadership because its influence operated through public service motivation (Astuti et al., 2023). These differences demonstrate the existence of important conceptual and empirical gaps that need further investigation, making leadership and government employee performance a suitable basis for preliminary study and research focus selection. Leadership in government institutions needs to be understood as a contextual mechanism rather than merely a personal characteristic of leaders that automatically improves employee performance.

Findings on authentic leadership strengthen the debate that transparent, reflective, and morally consistent leadership does not always produce performance directly. In the Sidoarjo Government, authentic leadership improved performance through authentic followership, making the leader-follower relationship a determining psychological pathway (Utomo et al., 2025). A similar pattern was found in public organizations in Turkey, where authentic leadership did not directly affect task performance but operated through supportive organizational culture (Ece & Erkmén, 2026). In the case of civil servants at a regional secretariat, ethical leadership was also stronger when linked to organizational citizenship behavior as an extra-role behavior that expands employee contribution (Iswanti et al., 2023). Therefore, leadership effectiveness cannot be assessed only from the leader's style, but must also be viewed through follower quality, cultural norms, and employees' voluntary behavior. Public employee performance is more likely to improve when leadership is translated into a supportive culture, authentic followership, and organizational behavior that goes beyond formal obligations.

Articles on crisis leadership and digital leadership confirm that changes in the bureaucratic environment require more adaptive leadership capability. In a crisis context, crisis leadership did not directly improve civil servant performance, but its influence was transmitted through knowledge sharing and public service motivation (Mao et al., 2025). In public sector organizations undergoing digital transformation, digital leadership also did not automatically increase employee performance, but operated through organizational learning, dynamic capability, and digital capability (Zam et al., 2025). In Surabaya smart city governance, public sector performance improved when managerial digital readiness was strengthened by digital leadership capable of connecting infrastructure, skills, and organizational decisions (Aldhi et al., 2025). This pattern indicates that modern bureaucracy requires leaders who are able to

activate knowledge, technological readiness, and service motivation. Adaptive leadership becomes effective when it is directed toward building organizational capacity, not merely giving administrative instructions to employees.

Across different public institutional contexts, employee performance was influenced by a combination of leadership, work systems, and organizational support. In PTN-BH institutions in Sumatra, leadership style, motivation, and remuneration were found to have direct effects on employee performance and organizational performance (Radhi et al., 2025). In the South Buton Regency Government, servant leadership improved civil servant performance through the strengthening of work culture in the regional agricultural development agenda (Muhazir et al., 2026). Meanwhile, in the Omani public sector, transactional leadership strengthened the effect of job description on performance, whereas transformational leadership did not show the same moderating role (AL Rawas & Jantan, 2023). These findings are important because bureaucratic performance depends greatly on task clarity, compensation fairness, work culture, and leadership style that is aligned with organizational needs. Effective leadership in government is a style that can integrate with incentive systems, task structures, and service culture.

Overall, the included articles show that ethical, authentic, transformational, transactional, servant, crisis, and digital leadership have different contributions to government employee performance. Effective leadership was proven to be an important mediator in linking organizational culture, governance, integrity, and employee performance at the KSOP office (Kusnadi et al., 2024). At the same time, ethical leadership may influence performance through OCB, indicating that leadership influence often emerges after employees demonstrate voluntary behavior, commitment, and willingness to support organizational work (Iswanti et al., 2023). Thus, differences in findings across leadership styles should not be viewed as contradictions, but as evidence that public sector performance is influenced by specific mediating pathways and organizational conditions. This synthesis confirms that a government leadership model must be designed situationally, grounded in public values, and integrated with organizational design.

CONCLUSION

This systematic review concludes that leadership style influences employee performance in government institutions, although this influence is more frequently indirect than direct. Transformational, authentic, ethical, servant, transactional, crisis, and digital leadership show different levels of effectiveness depending on organizational context, employee characteristics, job design, work culture, digital readiness, and public service motivation. The most consistent findings show that government employee performance improves when leadership styles are strengthened by mediators such as public service motivation, organizational citizenship behavior, supportive organizational culture, work culture, authentic followership, organizational learning, dynamic capability, and managerial digital readiness.

Leadership in government institutions cannot be understood only as the ability of leaders to provide direction, but should be positioned as a mechanism for shaping culture, motivation, digital capacity, extra-role behavior, and task alignment. Practically, government institutions need to develop leadership models that are contextual, ethical, adaptive, and grounded in public service. Leadership training should be directed toward strengthening integrity, communication, organizational learning, role clarity, and digital capacity so that employee performance can improve sustainably. This review also indicates the need for further research using longitudinal designs or mixed methods to explain changes in government employee performance more comprehensively.

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